

# Nitti Draws Dark Picture

A Review By ARTHUR LIVINGSTON

THE WRECK OF EUROPE. By Francesco Nitti. Bobbs-Merrill Company.

SO far as we can see the only good thing that the Treaty of Versailles can claim to have done beyond the possibility of any one's disputing it is to have made Keynes famous. Of Keynes ex-Premier Nitti says in his "Wreck of Europe": "After two years we must recognize that all the forecasts of Keynes have been borne out by the facts; the exchange question has grown worse in all the countries which have been in the war; the absurd indemnities imposed on the conquered cannot be paid; the depression of the vanquished is as harmful to the victors as to the vanquished themselves, menacing their very existence; in fine, the sense of dissolution is more widespread than ever."

But the two books of Keynes should find a very serious though a congenial rival in this birdseye view of Europe by a former Italian Premier, who, through force of circumstances, was also a signer of the Treaty of Versailles. Nitti's study (written some months ago to promote and to furnish a program of action for a great international conference which became the conference of Genoa) is a more comprehensive study of the peace and its consequences than any that has yet been published. It traverses an enormous field of fact, normally so embroiled that the most expert often find themselves bewildered in it, isolating the essential problems, clarifying their origins and the efforts made to settle them, putting the whole question of Europe, in short, into shape for discussion. Few statesmen with political prospects as good as those which Nitti still has would dare write a volume so courageous. Here there is no playing with phrases of double meaning; no attempts to ground a political ambition on all the virtues of the ages. The great Italian parliamentarian tells what the question is and exactly where he stands on it. It is possible to agree with him or to disagree with him—every propaganda in Europe (including those of his own country) will take the latter course; but he makes it easier to "stick to the point," and very difficult for right minded men to stray from it.

What, briefly, is the situation according to ex-Premier Nitti? President Wilson went to Paris with an aspiration to restore conditions of peace that would make the war less of a disaster and perhaps even the source of some blessings for the future. This aspiration was expressed in the fourteen points, which were upheld by a pledge of the victorious nations in the terms of the armistice. "In his ignorance of European affairs President Wilson was brought without recognizing it to accept a series of decisions not superficially in opposition to his fourteen points, but which did actually nullify them." (The first step was the French "joker" calling for "reparations for damages" introduced into the armistice agreement.) The doors are opened for the scramble. One by one the pledges of the victorious Powers are violated. The regime of violence, under French patronage especially, is established in Europe. On the one hand, in response to the pressure of this interest or that the great German racial unit is enslaved to a variety of ignorant and grasping military commissions. Strong and cultivated peoples are broken up and handed over to ambitious and incompetent bureaucracies of new creation. Paper empires (Poland, Greece, Rumania, Armenia) are glued together and inflated. Professional patriotism becomes a manner of life for thousands of adventurers in thirty new and undeveloped States in Europe. Enormous armaments, proportionally greater than those of militaristic Prussia at her worst, grow up in the continental countries. National finances collapse. Populations stop working. Nations, crazed with patriotic selfishness,

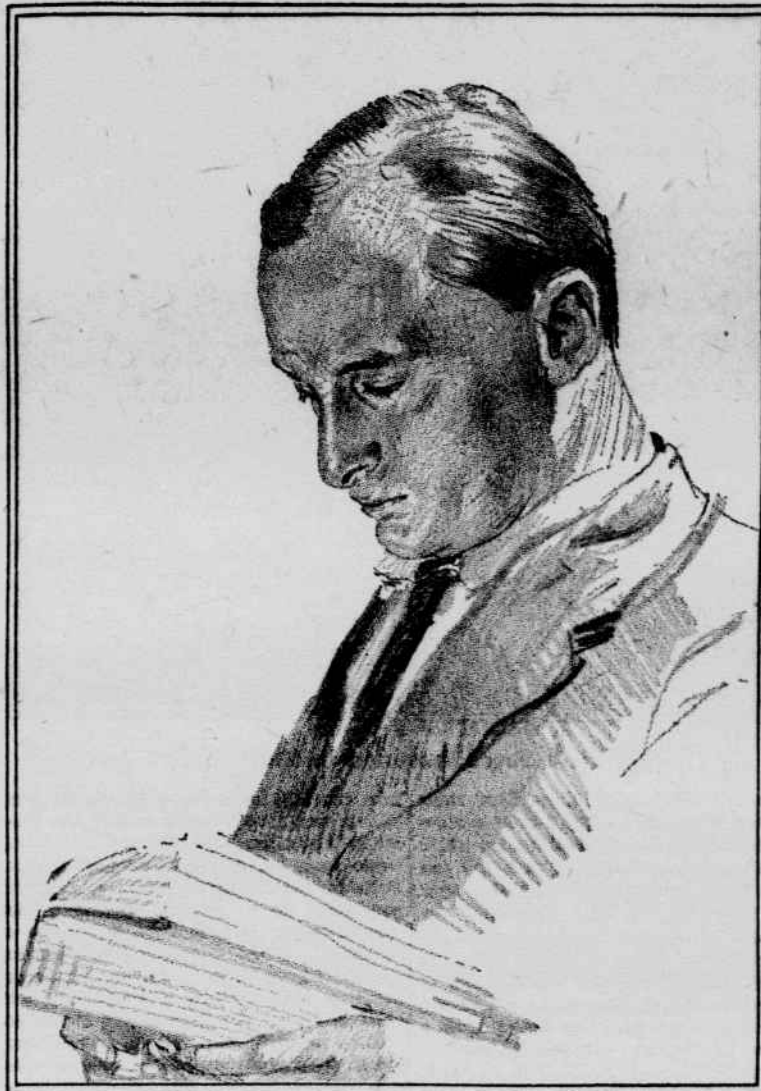
erect barriers against each other. Artificial situations are established which only new wars (or a general change of heart and tactics) can reconcile with realities.

It is a dark picture indeed that ex-Premier Nitti draws of Europe. And now Kemal's victory over what he calls the "Greek absurdity" comes to justify one of the Italian statesman's predictions.

"The Greece of Venizelos," says Nitti, "was the ward of the Entente almost more than Poland itself. Having participated in the war to a very small extent and with insignificant losses, she has almost trebled her territory and almost doubled her population. Turkey was virtually ejected from Europe, Greece taking almost everything. The frontier was fixed at Tchataldje and Constantinople brought

embark on the most risky undertakings in Asia Minor, with no escape save by coming to an agreement with Turkey. In the illusion of overcoming Turkish resistance she is obliged to maintain an army twice as big as that of the British Empire. Under the puff of some trifling military successes at first her dreams of greatness expand. What will happen? The strength of Turkey has always been her limitless powers of resistance. With time as her ally she wears her enemies down bit by bit. To subjugate the territories she has taken from Turkey Greece will have to exhaust the greater part of her limited resources. The Turks always checkmate those who would dominate them by a stubbornness born of a blend of religious fanaticism and racial and national patriotism."

In prophesying the present war in Asia Minor Mr. Nitti was saying only what everybody in Europe knew. But the split between England and France in the imminence of an Oriental conflagration



Harry Kemp, whose "Tramping on Life" was discussed in last week's Chronicle and Comment.

within range of Greek artillery. The Sanjak of Smyrna was the true wealth of Turkey, representing forty-five per cent. of the imports of the Turkish Empire. Although the population of the whole vilayet of Audin and the majority of the Sanjak of Smyrna were Mussulman, Greece was given dominion over it. The whole of Thrace was assigned to Greece, along with Adrianople, a city sacred to Islam and containing the tombs of the Caliphs.

"In the facility with which the demands of Greece were accepted, even after the fall of Venizelos, there was not only sympathy for Greece, but above all the conviction that a large Greek army at Smyrna would bring security to those countries which hold and are anxious to consolidate great interests in Asia Minor. As long as the Turks had their eyes on Smyrna they could not use their forces elsewhere. For the same reason all blame during the last few years has been attributed to the Turks. The errors, big and little, which they have made have been magnified into crimes. Their atrocities have been described, illustrated, exaggerated; all other atrocities, often no less serious, being meanwhile forgotten or ignored. . . .

"With so many territorial concessions on her hands Greece was obliged, even after the return of Constantine (who could not resist the pressure brought upon him), to

emphasize one of the dangers that may arise at any moment in any one of the regions of unrest in Europe. The victorious Powers at Versailles gave every one of the conquered nations, including Russia, a just cause for a righteous war, in furthering which, according to Mr. Nitti, all the propaganda that was used against Germany can be reversed against the Allies. Bad as it is, and again according to him, the Treaty of Versailles is a scrap of paper which the conquerors violate whenever they choose.

The way out of all this imbroglio is suggested in a program which Mr. Nitti, supported by his press, upheld against the French position at the Conference of Genoa: the revitalization of the League of Nations by admitting to it the Powers now excluded and transferring to it the work of the Reparations Commissions; a thorough revision of the Treaty of Versailles and its dependent agreements by the revamped League of Nations; a guarantee by England, Italy and the United States of the security of France from attack; cancellation of interallied state debts, beginning with those credited to the United States; reduction of the German indemnity to sixty billion gold francs, of which forty shall be regarded as already paid; reestablishment of friendly relations with Russia, ignoring the famous Russian debts.

## World Worries

THE POPULATION PROBLEM. By A. M. Carr-Saunders. Oxford University Press.

FOOD PRODUCTS FROM AFAR. By E. H. S. Bailey and H. S. Bailey. The Century Company.

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF LABOR PROBLEMS. By Gordon S. Watkins. Thomas Y. Crowell Company.

EVER since Malthus promulgated his epochmaking theories the problem of population has been more or less prominent in the eyes of economists. Though the mechanical multiplication of the means of production has tended to dispose of the idea that population necessarily encroaches on the limits of the food supply, yet the very increase in population made possible by mechanical contrivances, is responsible for a host of problems of which even Malthus could form no conception. Such is the conclusion one reaches from a perusal of A. M. Carr-Saunders's carefully reasoned and scholarly treatise, wherein the population question is treated comprehensively and from all points of view, ancient as well as modern, biological as well as economic.

It is Mr. Carr-Saunders's opinion that human fecundity has gradually been increasing throughout the ages; that, with the improvement in living conditions, the potential size of the average family has grown appreciably, and that, accordingly, man has become an exception to the general rule of nature, which provides that the fecundity of each species shall be such as to leave the numbers of succeeding generations approximately the same. Unlike his neighbors of the field and wood, man has become so fecund that his natural increase would be sufficient before many generations to menace the very welfare of the race. That it has not already become a menace is to be ascribed to the various intelligent limitations that have in all ages been placed upon human fecundity. Among primitive or even fairly civilized tribes the crude custom of infanticide has frequently been in favor; among more advanced races what Malthus terms "moral restraint," or voluntary celibacy, has tended to reduce the birth rate; and of recent years various other methods of birth control have resulted in the limitation of population. But despite the seriousness of efforts to prevent the too rapid increase of the human race, overpopulation is not the bugaboo that many have made it out to be; such disasters as pestilence and war are not necessary to reduce our race numerically; and, as Mr. Carr-Saunders points out, "so long as conditions remain healthy in a country overpopulation does not arise."

### II.

Closely connected with the question of population is the problem of securing the food supplies demanded by the ever growing complexity of human wants. In their interesting volume on "Food Products from Afar" E. H. S. Bailey and H. S. Bailey tell how the fruits and spices for civilized markets are secured from the furthest outposts of the world; how cinnamon is obtained from Ceylon, dates from Arabia, nuts from Brazil, sugar from Hawaii, tea from Formosa, rice from Siam and bananas from Central America. The book is valuable in describing the intricacy of the organization by which the innumerable requirements of a vast population are fulfilled and by which East and West, tropics and northern countries arrange for an interchange of goods.

### III.

Prof. Watkins's "Introduction to the Study of Labor Problems" is a volume that has an even closer bearing on the question of population, since labor problems, in the modern sense of the term, would be impossible without a large population and are in a large measure merely by-products of the numerical increase resulting from the mechanical improvements of the last century and a half. Prof. Watkins, indeed, takes particular pains to emphasize the fact that the growth of population is one of the main factors that have determined economic evolution; and this consideration is not far from his mind at any point in the discussion. The book covers the problems of labor in every aspect and phase, from the closed shop to employers' associations, from immigration to Socialism; it aims to be a sort of text book of the subject of industrial relations and is therefore so comprehensive as to be often sketchy and occasionally unconvincing.

STANTON A. COBLENTZ.

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